THE LIFE OF GEORGIA

288 Marco Polo, writing of Georgia at the beginning of the thirteenth century, observes that

> "silk is produced in great abundance. They also weave cloth of gold and all kinds of very fine silk stuffs. The country . . . has indeed not lack of anything, and the people live by trade and handicrafts." [1]

Again, in the fifteenth century, Josaphat Barbaro, writing of Shirvan and Aran after the troubled days of the Mongol domination, can still note their manufacture of "*fustians, lynen cloths, fryses, many rugges, and a lytel sylke . . . which they conveyed into the Sea Maggiore and to the towns about*".[2]

● 248 The mediæval Caucasus was no less important as a centre both of the dyeing industry and of the production of the raw materials of that industry for export. Such necessaries of the dyers' art as acorns, gall-nuts and vine and mulberry leaves, were, of course, to be found in abundance in the forests of Georgia, and in the orchards of Shirvan and Aran. But more valuable than these common products were the insects inhabiting oak-trees from which the mediæval dyers made "the beautiful colour called *kirmiz*",[3] and the madder and saffron which was grown in large quantities in Georgia, Shirvan and Aran. These two vegetable products were of vital importance to the dyeing and weaving industries of the countries of Islam. Madder—and particularly its roots—was one of the plants most necessary to the coloration of rugs. Used alone, it produced many shades of red from a rich scarlet to a gentle shade of pink; and the red most common in Persian rugs was produced by a mixture of alum-water, grape-juice and madder. Applied over indigo, madder effected many shades of brown, while the rich Persian blue was obtained by the reverse process; combined with indigo and other ingredients madder gave many variations of purple; diluted with milk and water and sour grape juice it obtained violet. Again, saffron, with all its variations of yellow and orange, gave, when mixed with indigo, many of the shades of green.

el-Idrissi states that

> "in all the country of Ran, that is to say from Bab-el-Abwab as far as Tiflis, madder grows on the ground, and they collect great quantities of it. This substance is transported by way of the Caspain Sea to Jorjan,[4] and from there on the back (of beasts of burden) into India. It is superior in quality to all other kinds of madder".[5]

Saffron likewise was exported from Derbend.

[1] Polo (Yule, I, p. 50). [2] Barbaro, p. 86. [3] ibn-Haukal, pp. 160–2.
[4] Jorjan, ancient Hyrcania, called later Ghilan. [5] el-Idrissi, II, 330.